



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

JAN 31 2011

IN REPLY REFER TO:

DIRECTOR'S ORDER #31B: RELOCATION POLICIES

Approved:

Jonathan B. Jarvis
Director

Effective Date: 2/1/2011

Duration: This order will remain in effect until amended or rescinded

This Director's Order, in conjunction with Resource Manual 31B (RM-31B) and the National Park Service Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Employee Handbook, establishes and defines standards and procedures for the NPS Relocation Program. The provisions of this Director's Order and the NPS PCS Employee Handbook supersede all previous NPS instructions, requirements, and statements of policy relating to the relocation program that may be in conflict. Policies applicable to temporary duty travel are the subject of Director's Order #31A (which is not yet available).

Contents

- I. Background and Purpose
- II. Authorities
- III. Policies, Instructions, and Requirements
- IV. Responsibilities

I. Background and Purpose

One of the most important tools available to help us meet the Service's mission requirements is the ability to place the right employee in the right job. This often requires that we move an employee from one duty station to another. The costs associated with this activity are significant and must be controlled to the maximum extent possible.

It is also important that relocation activities be carried out in strict compliance with applicable policies, laws, regulations, and required procedures. The permanent change of station travel matters for which we are accountable include travel authorizations, travel advances, use of the government-issued charge card, eligibility for relocation expense reimbursements, computation of relocation expense reimbursements, relocation services companies, and relocation income tax

allowances. Our primary source of guidance on these matters is the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR). The FTR can be found at <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21222>.

The purpose of this Order is to: 1) set forth the most salient NPS travel policies and required procedures for managing an effective program for relocating employees; 2) establish a system of internal instructions and other guidance that ensures managers and other personnel performing relocation functions have an understanding of the FTR; 3) ensure control measures are in place to prevent fraud, waste and abuse; and 4) designate and prescribe specific responsibilities for the relocation program.

II. Authorities

The authority to issue this Order is contained in the NPS Organic Act (16 USC 1-4) and in delegations of authority contained in Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual. Statutory authority governing employee travel and relocation is found in 5 U.S.C., Chapter 57, §§ 5721 through 5739 (Travel, Transportation, and Subsistence). The FTR governing employee relocation is found in 41 CFR Chapter 302, subchapters A through F. Department of the Interior guidance and procedures required to implement the FTR are issued as Financial Management Memoranda (previously called Financial Administration Memoranda), and are available on-line at <http://www.aoc.nps.gov>.

This Order is intended only to improve the internal management of the NPS, and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

III. Policies, Instructions, and Requirements

A. Overview

The NPS Comptroller is delegated functional authority relating to official travel and relocation by NPS employees, and for ensuring that the policies, procedures, and other guidance applicable to these activities are efficiently communicated throughout the Service. To a large extent, the policies and procedures governing employee travel and relocation are prescribed by authorities outside the NPS—in particular, the General Services Administration and the Department of the Interior. Under the NPS directives system, policies and procedures imposed by these higher authorities may be issued as “Level 3” guidance by a subordinate manager.

In addition, relocation of employees is closely linked to the staffing of positions within the Service. As an extension of the staffing process, relocation guidance should be viewed holistically, along with the Office of Personnel Management’s rules regarding recruitment and relocation bonuses and other staffing flexibilities available to the NPS. Guidance on the applicability and use of the recruitment and relocation bonus authorities is separate from the entitlement to reimbursement of relocation expenses under the FTR. Use of the bonus authorities is the responsibility of the Associate Director, Workforce Management. In light of these circumstances, this Director’s Order contains only the most significant policy and procedural requirements applicable to relocation under the FTR. The full array of policies and procedures is deferred to the manual and handbook to be issued by the Comptroller, and human

resources management guidance appropriately issued by the Associate Director, Workforce Management.

B. General Rules

1. Avoiding Unnecessary Costs. Authorizing officials will consider the cost of relocation and be certain that there is not a more economical means of accomplishing the job. Other alternatives to the relocation of employees may include the training of available employees or local recruitment. When it is determined that the local commuting area is not sufficient to generate a diverse pool of highly qualified applicants and thus it is necessary to expand the search to outside the local commuting area, all announcements (both merit promotion and delegated examining) **must** offer reimbursement for relocation costs. (See Human Resources Bulletin 09-03 and Human Resources Bulletin 09-03a, which is available at <http://www.inside.nps.gov/waso/orglist.cfm>, by selecting Workforce Management, HR Bulletins, for additional guidance.)

2. Vacancy Announcements. In accordance with Human Resources policies, all vacancy announcements must indicate whether relocation expenses 'will' or 'will not' be paid. When advertising within the local commuting area, since all solicited applicants will be local, relocation expenses will not be paid. When the area of consideration extends beyond the local commuting area, all vacancy announcements must indicate that relocation expenses will be paid. Refer to the DOI Personnel Bulletin No. 99-06 (500), which is available at <http://www.doi.gov/hrm/guidance/pb99-6.htm>; and the NPS Human Resources Bulletin 09-03 and supplements for more information.

3. Employee Notification. The employee must be notified in writing in the letter of offer and acceptance whether relocation expenses will or will not be reimbursed. The SF-50 Personnel Action must indicate that relocation expenses are or are not authorized. Informing the employee verbally that their relocation costs will not be reimbursed does not relieve the Government from liability.

4. Allowable Relocation Expenses. All reimbursement amounts are determined in accordance with the limits and criteria of the Federal Travel Regulation. Allowable entitlement to relocation expenses depends on whether the relocating employee is a new appointee or a current Federal employee transferring from one Federal position to another Federal position. Consult with the Human Resources Specialist to determine whether an employee encumbering a seasonal, temporary, or term position converting to a permanent appointment without a break in service is treated as a transferring employee or a new employee.

(a) For new appointees:

- (1) En route per diem allowance for the appointee only.
- (2) Transportation costs for the appointee and his/her family.
- (3) Transportation of household goods and personal effects.
- (4) Temporary storage of household goods and personal effects not to exceed 90 days.
- (5) Transportation of mobile home in lieu of household goods move.
- (6) Non-temporary storage of household goods, if appointed to an isolated location.

(b) For transferring employees:

- (1) En route per diem allowance and transportation for employee and family.
- (2) Transportation of household goods and personal effects.
- (3) Temporary storage of household goods and personal effects.
- (4) Transportation of mobile home in lieu of household goods move.
- (5) Non-temporary storage of household goods, if transferring to an isolated location.
- (6) Costs of an advance house hunting trip, if approved in advance.
- (7) Temporary subsistence while occupying temporary quarters, if approved in advance of occupying temporary quarters.
- (8) Miscellaneous expense allowances.
- (9) Lease-breaking expenses.
- (10) Residence sale and purchase expenses.

IV. Responsibilities

A. Comptroller

1. Ensure that control measures are in place to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.
2. Establish and maintain a system of internal instructions and other guidance that provides managers and other personnel performing relocation functions with an understanding of the FTR and other laws, regulations, and policies that govern employee relocation.
3. As appropriate, redelegate authority relating to travel and relocation to the most effective level. Refer to the Delegations of Authority for Travel, Transportation and Relocation Allowances.
4. Prepare and update, as needed, a detailed handbook to guide employees through the permanent change of station process.

B. Manager, Accounting Operations Center

1. Ensure that vouchers for relocation expenses are audited properly within the timeframe established by policy.
2. Approve and process payments in accordance with the FTR, with funds transferred to the employee's financial institution.
3. Ensure that the employee handbook and other helpful guidance documents applicable to relocation are available on the Internet for the convenience of managers and other NPS employees.

C. Relocation Coordinators

1. Coordinate all facets of a permanent change of station for new appointees or transferring employees.
2. Ensure that the Travel Authorization contains specific relocation allowances for the new appointee or transferring employee.
3. Explain relocation allowances and procedures to new appointees and transferring employees.

D. Supervisors

1. Prior to advertising a position that might entail relocation, consider that there is not an alternative means of accomplishing the job (such as training of an available employee or local recruitment) without incurring relocation expenses.
2. Where an advertised position might entail relocation, ensure that the announcement indicates whether relocation expenses 'will' or 'will not' be paid. Refer to the DOI Personnel Bulletin No. 99-06 (500) and the NPS Human Resources Bulletin 09-03 and its supplements for more information.
3. Ensure that any new appointee or transferring employee who will be relocating has been provided a copy of the PCS Employee Handbook, which can be found at AOC's website, and advised of the importance of complying fully with the procedures outlined therein.
4. Within the scope of their supervisory authority, take all appropriate steps to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.

E. Employees

1. New appointees and transferring employees must read the PCS Employee Handbook and submit the required forms so that their assigned relocation coordinator can prepare the Travel Authorization.
2. Avoid incurring any relocation expenses prior to being issued a Travel Authorization.
3. Submit all vouchers and required documentation for reimbursement of relocation expenses to the Accounting Operations Center for payment. Section 9 of the PCS Employee Handbook stipulates that this be done within 5 business days after each segment (i.e., house hunting trip, en route travel, each 30-day period or portion thereof of temporary quarters) of the relocation.

-----End of Director's Order-----

Permanent Change of Station Resource Manual

[http://www.aoc.nps.gov/documents/fst%20docs/tt/PCS/Resource%20Manual/NPS%20Relocation%20Resource%20Manual%20\(PDF\).pdf](http://www.aoc.nps.gov/documents/fst%20docs/tt/PCS/Resource%20Manual/NPS%20Relocation%20Resource%20Manual%20(PDF).pdf)

Permanent Change of Station Employee Handbook

[http://www.aoc.nps.gov/documents/fst%20docs/tt/PCS/Employee%20Handbook/NPS%20Permanent%20Change%20of%20Station%20Employee%20Handbook%20\(PDF\).pdf](http://www.aoc.nps.gov/documents/fst%20docs/tt/PCS/Employee%20Handbook/NPS%20Permanent%20Change%20of%20Station%20Employee%20Handbook%20(PDF).pdf)